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ABSTRACT

The New Zealand early childhood education experience is studied in order to discover practices which might be adapted for use in the United States. Data are presented on social and governmental factors influencing the development of early childhood education in New Zealand. Preschool education is conducted by private volunteer groups subsidized by the government. The purposes and organization of the two types of preschool program are presented. The Play Center is parent-operated, emphasizes play as a medium for self-realization, and receives a small amount of financial support from the government. The Kindergarten, which is staffed by government teachers, focuses on preparation of the child to enter Primary I, and receives a large amount of financial support from the government. Of particular interest is the "drop-in" admission to first grade immediately after each child's fifth birthday. Interviews with 236 teachers, administrators, and parents form the basis for position statements which give pros and cons of the first grade admission procedure. The educational disadvantage of Maori children is discussed. Research possibilities are indicated. (NH)

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PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ADMISSION PRACTICES IN NEW ZEALAND

Jack W. Birch

Jane R. Birch

School of Education

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

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PREFACE

Our initial purpose was to become well acquainted with the unique school admission practice for beginners in the primary schools of New Zealand and to ascertain whether the New Zealand practice might recommend itself for trial in the United States. Correspondence with colleagues in New Zealand and conversations with Dr. Paul Watson and others at the University of Pittsburgh led to broadening the purpose to include observation of pre-primary education in general and the pre-primary education of Maori children in particular. That was consistent with our strong interest in pre-school and primary education, and it offered additional opportunities to learn what in New Zealand might suggest hypotheses for further investigation.

We wished to understand the dynamics of New Zealand pre-school and admission practices rather than make comparisons between New Zealand and the United States. It was important to us to elicit the viewpoints and the reasoning of New Zealanders about their educational procedures while avoiding as much as possible any evaluative comparison with equivalent practices in the United States. As might be expected, we found that abstinence from comparisons was made very difficult because of the encouragement we were given by New Zealand colleagues and the New Zealand press to offer our reactions to the differences in their practices and those of our home country. It is our hope that where such comparisons are noted they will be construed as we intended them, --- entirely descriptive and included only to make the setting of the investigation clear.

We are most grateful to the Director of Primary Education for New Zealand, Bryan M. Pinder, for the arrangements he made for our travel and study during January and February, 1969. He was very generous with his own time, a wonderful source of professional guidance, and a superb host. And his attributes were shared by all the others who helped us.

Outside Wellington we depended most heavily upon District Senior Inspectors John Lee of Auckland and Jack Wisely of Wanganui. They and

their colleagues were exceptionally helpful.

We had the opportunity, once we were back in Pittsburgh and had a rough draft put together, to have the draft reviewed by several colleagues. Dr. W. David Barney, on leave from the faculty of education at the University of Auckland, read and discussed it. So did another New Zealander, Mr. Colin De'Ath, a doctoral student in international and development education at Pittsburgh. Dr. Godfrey D. Stevens and his wife, Mrs. Pearl Lewis Stevens, gave their reactions, too, based on having studied education in New Zealand only a few years earlier while Dr. Stevens was a Fulbright Scholar there. Dr. John Singleton, chairman of international and development education at Pittsburgh, was kind enough to review the draft from his vantage point as an educator and an anthropologist very familiar with the peoples and cultures of the Pacific. Dr. Ernest Dorow, a specialist in social studies education, raised a number of important questions. And we were encouraged in the entire undertaking by the warm support of Dr. Paul H. Masoner, Dean of the School of Education.

We hasten to point out, however, that all responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation in the material which follows is solely our own. We hope, also, that whoever notes them will call them to our attention so they may be corrected.

Jack W. Birch

Jane R. Birch

INTRODUCTION

This has been an exploratory, information-gathering and hypothesis-formulating investigation. The broad purpose was to determine what might be learned from New Zealand early childhood education experience for possible adaptation or application in the United States.

New Zealand was known to engage in two early childhood educational procedures not practiced in the United States or any other English-speaking country. One was the "drop-in" admission of each child to first grade on his fifth birthday, whenever that occurred in the school year, rather than all children beginning together on the first day of the term. The other was pre-school education conducted by private volunteer groups subsidized by the government. The first of these was the major initial focus of the study, but it soon became apparent that a "domino effect" resulted in the same style of admission to pre-school classes. Moreover, the separated and private nature of pre-school classes called for equal examination. The "drop-in" admission style of entry to first grade appears to New Zealand citizens to have advantages. A news release from the New Zealand Government Information Service put it this way:

> "You may have forgotten your first day at school but chances are that it has been more important to you than all the rest of your school days put together.
>
> It is all a question of timing.
>
> There are only two basic ways of timing a child's entry into the new world that is school. One way can lead to uniformity, conformity. The other is the way of individuality. The effects on personality can last a lifetime.
>
> By the first method, the mass production method, all children start school together, on the first day of the first term after they reach the qualifying age. In the case of a large school, there might be 80 young children, who have all that very day been pitchforked into an environment new and strange, among companions

who are equally upset and doubtful, marshalled by teachers who are themselves suffering from the special atmosphere of that special day.

By contrast, the second method, the method of individual entry, takes the child to school on the earliest convenient day after he has himself attained the qualifying age. He may be, probably will be, the only entrant on that day. He can be welcomed as a guest. He may find he has novelty value; at the least he has an identity of his own from the very first minute. He enters into a calm and settled atmosphere of already adjusted companions and teachers."

The government-sponsored New Zealand Information Service displays equally strong convictions about the merits of the nation's pre-school education, as the following statement indicates:

"...the method of individual entry...is reinforced by the prevalence of pre-school kindergartens run on play-school lines. These ensure a high degree of social adjustment, outside the family, long before formal school entry."

The operations of the individual entry method and the pre-school programs were the subjects of this investigation. They were considered in terms of their impact on the European and Maori population of New Zealand and in terms of their possible application in the United States.

It should be understood that our observations on New Zealand and its culture are painted with a broad brush, since we could not hope to include details about all relevant matters. Rather, we intend to encourage the reader to find, as we did, a number of inviting questions and hypotheses which deserve careful, analytical investigations in the future. Such studies would, in our judgment, be most fruitful if they were planned and conducted in both New Zealand and the United States by teams representing both nations.

PROCEDURES USED IN THE STUDY

The investigators employed several data-gathering procedures, including:

Review of current professional literature

Study of historical records

Analysis of contemporary news media reports

Direct observation of pre-school and primary classes, both public and private. (In most instances both observers visited the same schools on alternate days and both revisited schools at one to three week intervals.)

Polling of groups of educators and others

Group discussions with educational leaders

Analysis of documents regarding policies, practices and regulations of public and private education agencies

In-depth interviews, singly or in small groups, with:

Educational administrators and supervisors

Community leaders

Officers of early childhood education associations

Parents

Teachers

The above approaches were used as the situations required.

The literature review was made more effective than it would otherwise have been because well-informed New Zealanders gave it initial direction. Dr. W. David Barney and Dr. Marie Clay of the University of Auckland were most helpful. The literature examination continued and expanded throughout the stay in New Zealand.

Historical records about schools and schooling were studied, with particular reference to attempting to locate the source of the "drop-in" school admission practice. Attendance records and logs of individual schools supplemented documents made available at the national Office of the Director of Primary Education and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research in Wellington.

News media reports were analyzed as part of the deliberate efforts of the investigators to immerse themselves in the New Zealand society and culture. Every day each read every item in at least one newspaper, and usually two or more. Since the study involved travel to all parts of New Zealand, the 72 local and regional papers published in the country were well sampled. The same was true of radio programs, though it was feasible to listen to them mostly in the evenings and on weekends. There is relatively little television in New Zealand as yet, and radio has been developed to a very high level for information, entertainment and feature presentations.

Public and private pre-school and primary classes and related agencies were observed on both the North and South Islands. Arrangements were made by the district senior inspectors of primary education, by regional education offices, and private citizens. In a number of instances it was possible to visit the same primary schools on three occasions: before school opened, the day school opened, and several days after school opened. In many instances the two investigators visited the same school on alternate days. The advantages of such continuity and cross-checking in observations are evident.

Advantage was taken of in-servicing training courses and professional meetings to gather evidence about the New Zealand system of staggered admissions to Primary I (first grade). In Christchurch and Wellington, major centers of the South and North Islands, large groups of primary headmasters (elementary principals) and supervisors of junior classes (primary supervisors) expressed for us in writing their professional judgments about the merits and limitations of the manner in which children begin school. To these were added similar expressions obtained in small group and individual sessions in Auckland, Wanganui, Palmerston North and a number of smaller communities and rural areas. In all, a sample of more than three hundred primary teachers, supervisors of junior classes, assistant primary headmasters, primary headmasters, inspectors,

supervisors, senior inspectors, kindergarten teachers, play center supervisors, college and university teachers, business men and women, and parents and children were polled about their views on school admission practices.

Through the kindess of senior inspectors, play center and kindergarten officials, the Director of the New Zealand Council on Educational Research, and many others, it was often arranged that we could talk informally with small groups of educational leaders wherever we stayed two or three days. These sessions were usually recorded and the recording mailed to Pittsburgh to be typed for reference upon our return. Initial resistance to recording was frequently encountered, but it was never a serious matter and the participants quickly learned to either use the equipment with ease or ignore it.

FINDINGS ON EDUCATION IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

Herbert Roth's "Bibliography of New Zealand Education" contains dozens of references regarding the schooling of young children. Rather than attempt to summarize that body of information here, we have selected topics which we considered of salient importance for our investigation. To a very considerable extent the findings we have chosen to present are those which seem to us to bear a dynamic relationship to the early childhood education process, and particularly the pre-school years and school admission.

Purposes of the Primary School

There seemed to be no significant differences in the role assigned to the primary schools in New Zealand and in any other English-speaking country of approximately equivalent level of development and living standards. From the point of view of the parents, it is the time and place at which their children begin to learn the fundamental operations,--"reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic,"--as well as begin to receive the cultural heritage in a formal fashion. Also, from the parents' point of view, it is a time of learning to live and work with others. A national objective, of course, is to assure that the children of the nation become educated as a foundation for effective citizenship and for maintaining and contributing to the national well-being.

Administration of Early Childhood Education

The government's participation in pre-school education is concentrated in the central government office at Wellington. Provincial or local boards of education or school committees have practically nothing to do with the operation of pre-school education with the occasional exception that they may rent space to groups interested in using school rooms to provide pre-school education. Only in recent years in New Zealand has

even the first two years of the primary school been part of the regular school operation in the sense that they are integrated into the same building. In the past the infant schools (Grades one and two or Primary I and Primary II) were located in their own buildings. The infant school buildings, although usually on the same school property, have been separated clearly from the rest of the primary school, except in small country schools.

With that tradition it is not surprising that play centers and kindergartens are located separately from primary schools. Local school committees, however, may rent property or school rooms to the persons interested in operating kindergartens or play centers if available in the primary schools of the district. That happens usually in larger communities where there are population shifts which may leave empty rooms in primary schools or where there may be unused rooms built in anticipation of population growth.

New Zealand educators themselves find no logic to the separate administration of pre-school education from the administration of primary education. Many leaders speak hopefully of a long-range development which would bring the two together while maintaining the good qualities of both.

The Supervisor of Junior Classes

A key person for early childhood education primary schools is the Supervisor of Junior Classes (S. J. C.) who has responsibility under the direction of the headmaster for the first two years of primary school.

Originally, S. J. C. was known as the Infant Mistress. The title was recently changed to accommodate the fact that some men have been interested in taking leadership in the junior department. More recently there is the beginning of what may become a trend to extend the range of the S. J. C.'s responsibility to include the first three years of primary school.

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In addition, the S.J.C. has general responsibility for liaison with kindergarten and the play center schools. The kindergarten and the play center is not under the authority of the S.J.C. However, recently it is becoming expected that the S.J.C. should know about all the kindergarten and play centers in the area served by the primary school; be acquainted with the staffs; have the staffs come to the primary school to visit; and generally establish cordial working relationships with the two.

Supplying Instructional Materials

Except for standard basic equipment provided directly and at no cost, it appears to be a general practice in New Zealand for district boards to purchase instructional materials for primary schools in large quantities and then sell them at low cost to the individual school committees. Each primary school has its own committee elected from the constituency of the local school district and the primary school committee has a sum of money awarded to it for its own use from the district board of education.

The allocated money is then used in part for the purchase of instructional materials from the central district. This co-operative commissary approach was pioneered in the Aukland district. It is an illuminating sidelight that private suppliers of instructional materials sued the district, claiming that the cooperative purchase plan deprived the private suppliers of the advantages of selling directly to individual schools. The case was settled, allowing the practice to continue.

The same kind of practice is used, only on a much less formal scale, in the supplying of instructional materials to play centers. The purveyor in this case is the regional play center association, furnishing supplies to the locals which operate centers. Lists of approved and recommended instructional materials are available for both play centers and kindergartens.

The Pre-School Child Census

The S. J. C. is expected to have knowledge of all of the pre-school children in the attendance district of that particular primary school and to know when they may be expected to enroll in school. The headmaster works with the S.J.C. in setting up rolls of such children. Most headmasters conduct some kind of a school census in the attendance area in order to be sure of the numbers of children coming into school in the next year. That is essential because in July of each year the headmaster must indicate to the central office what his staff needs will be for the coming year, beginning in February. In addition, three year projections are made. Thus, a knowledge of the number of pre-school children and their dates of birth is essential.

Dental clinics for children expedite obtaining information about the whereabouts and ages of pre-school children. The dental clinic is, of course, a health department function. A nurse-dentist is in charge of each clinic, and clinics are located on or near primary school grounds.

All children from two and a half to eighteen years are entitled to free dental service. The age range encompasses children in the pre-school and primary school years. Since parents typically want to have their children's teeth taken care of through the free dental service, they register at the dental clinic. Therefore, the headmaster can check the school census with records of the dental clinic and make use of both lists in estimating the number of children who will be coming to primary school. Typically the S.J.C., using all that information, has a book which lists all of the children who will be coming to school during the current and next school year.

There is no legal requirement in New Zealand that a standard early childhood school census be taken. However, each headmaster does make such a census to be sure that enrollment estimates are correct. Thus, using the census and the information from the dental clinic registrations it is possible for the S.J.C. to know very near how many children will become five years old during the year and on what days of the school year children will be entering.

Family mobility affects the accuracy of any census, and there are sections of communities in which mobility is high. The effects, however, are controlled to some extent by continually up-dating the census through information from older siblings when they enter school, or the dental registration and by information about newcomers from children who move away and whose house the newcomers will occupy.

Kindergarten and Play Center Enrollments

Kindergartens account for approximately 28,000 children in New Zealand from three to five years of age. Play Centers take care of another 22,000 in approximately the same age range. Generally, 65,000 or approximately 25% of New Zealand children at any one time are in some kind of pre-school education or care, when the Child Care Center population of about 15,000 is included. Private kindergartens and private nursery facilities, while available in most places where there is a demand for them, do not serve more than a very small percentage of the total population.

Differences Between Play Centers and Kindergartens

Play centers are operated by parents. Professional guidance is minimal, and it is not paid for by the government or by the school district. In contrast, the government runs the kindergartens with some help from the parents. The parents must raise approximately $800 to $900 a year for a kindergarten. The rest of the costs are absorbed by the government. Play center parents do not have to raise as much money initially as kindergarten parents, but they must commit much more personal time on a continuing basis.

The government provides the training of teachers for kindergarten and supervision for them from the state office. Training of teachers for the play centers on the other hand is done by the Play Center Association itself. Often the Play Center Associations use extension services of

colleges and universities, but not university or college credit courses. In addition, they have volunteer help from interested professional people.

There is a real jealousy between the kindergarten and play center movements based on contrasts of feeling between professional and non-professional people. The kindergarten people, as well as their supporters, take the point of view that they do have professional training. Thus, they know what is good for the child and can provide for the child's education. Kindergarten leaders and teachers take parents into their confidence, but not as full cooperating partners. Rather, parents are treated as persons to be instructed and helped. In contrast, the play center movement is a parent-organized and parent-developed movement. It never denies the importance of professional leadership and assistance. However, it takes the position that parents are perfectly competent to help themselves and that the design and development of programs for young children are well within the capabilities of the parents who wish to inform themselves about such matters and who do so outside collegiate and university professional circles.

The result is that we find play center leaders saying that government education leaders are unsymphathetic toward play centers because they find them "untidy". Also we find Play Center leaders saying that university leaders might say, "They (play center supervisors) can't really do very much because they're just mums."

On the other side we would find university leaders calling attention to the rift between the kindergarten adherents and the play school adherents and we could find government education leaders saying, "The play center folk are very nice people but they are also very much befuddled." Government education leaders would hold that play center leadership is somehow blinded to the importance of professional work and oversold on the idea that anything that has a large degree of parent involvement is necessarily good.

Parents often refer to the play centers as being more permissive. It is not entirely clear what they mean, but it does seem that they

contrast play center permissiveness with the kindergarten which they consider quite rigid. Thus, they could mean by permissive, "flexible". One reason for thinking so came out of a discussion w th some parents, one of whom was the equipment supervisor for a play center and the other a former organizer and official. In the conversation it was pointed out that there was no necessary minimum age limit on admission to play centers. Typically, the children begin to go to play centers at about age $2\frac{1}{2}$,--although they may start at age 3 or $3\frac{1}{2}$. Also, if a child is in play center and has a younger brother or sister two years of age and wants to bring that youngster along when the mother is in attendance as a part of the play center staff, that is perfectly alright. As a matter of fact, it would be thought of as a good idea since it would get that younger child more interested in the idea of play centers at an early age and because it would make a more natural situation for play for both the mother and the child in attendance in the play center. Such an arrangement, of course, would not be acceptable in the kindergarten where strict age requirements prevail. Such a difference would be an example of permissiveness viewed as flexibility.

There are sharp differences in purpose between play centers and kindergartens as judged from the statements of play center supervisors and kindergarten teachers and from the points of view expressed by the national, regional and local officers of the two. Moreover, while there was some overlap observed between play center and kindergarten activities, there were more evident differences than similarities.

The kindergarten, it appears to us, focuses fairly specifically on preparing children to enter Primary I. The time schedule of the half-day of kindergarten is very similar in miniature to the all-day schedule of Primary I. The "lining up", the sitting on mats to listen to the teacher, the frequent "grouping" for one purpose or another, the encouragement to "play house", the emphasis on following the teacher's directions, the teacher-selected or teacher-encouraged activities,--all these and many other characteristics of kindergartens distinguish them as mainly encouraging the learning of rather specific skills and abilities and social behaviors

aimed at laying a foundation for Primary I.

The play center, in contrast, emphasizes play as a medium for self-realization, focusing on the present interests and abilities of the children and encouraging any emerging behavior so long as it is not destructive beyond reasonable and safe limits, as judged by the observing adults. There is much watching, and waiting to be asked by the child to help, on the part of the supervisor and the assistants. Save for the beginning and end of sessions and parents' teatime, there is little that could be called a schedule.

Kindergartens operate on a five half-day per week schedule. Parents (almost always mothers) take turns serving a number of days helping the teacher, but seldom are more than two or three parents present at a time, and they have little to say about what the daily program should be. In play centers, children attend a maximum of three half-day sessions per week. Parents (usually mothers but often fathers) or other family members are always there, and the program is one they help to determine, to the extent that there is a systematic program. The play center "teacher" is a parent whose child is usually in attendance.

Parents of kindergarten children are invited and encouraged to attend regular meetings with the kindergarten teachers. Play center parents are required to attend courses offered by specialists, with the focus of such courses on preparing the parents to take leadership roles in the play center movement.

It seemed to us that there was substantially more participation by fathers in the play center and its affairs than in the kindergarten and its operations.

As we see it, the kindergarten is a downward extension of the school. The play center is an outward extension of the home.

At the national level in the section of the New Zealand Education Office specifically responsible for pre-school programs there is a tendency to minimize the difference between the play center and the kindergarten so far as their purposes and the implementation of those purposes are concerned. Nevertheless the differences are and remain real and they are potentially highly important to the nation.

The influence of the kindergarten and the play center combined is felt by less than one-fourth of the child population. And they are about equally divided in the number of children they touch. Thus there remains the major question of what form of early childhood education will ultimately prevail in New Zealand.

Child Care Center Enrollment and Programs

Child care centers take care of approximately 15,000 New Zealand children under the age of five. While they are licensed to operate by the national education office, they are not considered schools. They are licensed to provide a service which keeps a child safe and sound during the day while his mother and father are occupied with other matters.

Centers sometimes have limited space for a few children to stay overnight, if necessary. They take children from shortly after birth to five years. In actuality, they often do operate not only as child care centers but also as nurseries, play centers, or kindergartens. All of these may be going on in the same child care center.

The educational service which these centers offer is not officially recognized as such, so it is not possible to get accurate figures. Responsible officers of the Association of Child Care Centers estimate that childhood educational activities of some sort go on in the vast majority of child care centers, and a substantial number have such programs conducted by instructors qualified either as graduates of play center training courses or kindergarten teacher training programs.

Early Childhood Education Curriculum

What is taught in the early years? How is it effected by the admission procedure? How is instruction organized so as to accommodate to the New Zealand school beginning practice? Educational personnel at all levels were encouraged to discuss the affects of their way of bringing new entrants to school on curriculum both in pre-school education and the first year of formal schooling.

The Pre-school Curriculum is quite open to development in New Zealand. There really is no structured pre-school curriculum, in the sense of nationally or locally-prepared guidelines providing objectives and a general framework for learning activities in the kindergarten or the play school. Education is determined by the teacher's ideas plus material remembered from lectures by teachers' college or other instructors.

There are no visible externally-imposed constraints on what the teacher does in the classroom regarding curriculum, teaching methods or instructional materials. Yet there seems to be a remarkable similarity among curriculum, teaching methods and instructional materials, especially in kindergartens, in all parts of the nation. This suggests that uniform curriculum guides or course outlines may not be the culprits, as they are often held to be, when minimal variation from classroom to classroom is observed.

A "domino effect" with respect to school admission is triggered by children leaving pre-school programs upon attaining the fifth birthday. Other children then tend to enter kindergarten and play centers to fill places vacated intermittently through the year, though they do not necessarily enter on their birthdays. Teachers concur on the value of (1) teaching new entrants to feel at ease with a group of other children and (2) teaching the children already present how to welcome and assist a newcomer. Many teachers have routines they employ for such teaching. Aside from this, however, no interactions of curriculum and entry procedure could be located in kindergartens and play centers.

Play Center Curriculum - A substantial body of curriculum literature on play centers is distributed by the Play Centers Associations, chiefly in the form of pamphlets and off-prints. There is no single publication or group of publications officially dubbed the curriculum guide or course outline. Instead it is expected that the play center supervisor will guide the evolution of a curriculum suited to the children, utilizing principles learned while in training.

The leader of the play center session is not called a teacher, but rather a play center supervisor, and is a mother who has been trained through a series of in-service courses offered by the Play Center Association. The play center supervisor tends to be a mother of a child currently in the play center program, and often is supervisor only for the years she has children actually in the play center sessions. Before or after that she may do other things in connection with the play center for there are many activities which call for parental interest and help.

There is, therefore, no course outline or schedule of activities which all or even most play centers follow. There is no doubt whatever the play center objectives are made clear in the training programs. The implementation of these objectives, however, is left to the local supervisor and assistants and mothers groups. There are frequent meetings of the mothers who have children in the play center and one of the functions of these meetings is a continuous and informed monitoring of the curriculum itself. The mothers talk about the growth that their children are experiencing, relate the activities of the play center sessions to what has happened in the development of their children, and project future play center activities in terms of what changes they wish to take place in the behavior of their children and their future growth. Informality is emphasized, as is the function of play as a chief means by which the child learns.

Kindergarten curriculum is even less evident in written form than is that of the Play Center. There is uniformity as previously noted, however. It is probably engendered by the instructions prospective kindergarten teachers receive in the national training centers. The skills, attitudes and abilities fostered in kindergarten seem to be aimed rather directly at readiness for Primary I. In spite of the absence of specific guidelines, there seemed to be remarkable similarity among kindergarten programs in all parts of the country.

Primary I Curriculum is generally formal, prescribed by the national educational authorities, and close to identical in all parts of the country.

Substantive matters regarding the curriculum are spelled out in detail in a series of government publications which deserve examination by the interested investigator. Suffice it to say at this point that the Primary I curriculum provides the teacher with quite thorough direction as to what it is expected will be taught.

The Physical Plant of the Play Center and Kindergarten

We observed everything from the most dilapidated old building in use as a play center to one of the finest examples of pre-school architecture that could be imagined. It should be emphasized that the dilapidated one was not in bad repair in the sense that it was unsafe. The parents maintain the buildings or pool their funds to pay for maintenance.

In the Auckland region, several young architects have become interested in the play center movement, often a result of their own children being in attendance. The buildings designed by such architects were notable for excellent open play space and for indoor areas which were well lighted and easy to use. They also had outdoor play space, both covered and uncovered, in ample amount.

Kindergarten design is prescribed by the government. Attractive and appropriate basic plans are available from the Department of Education at Wellington.

Findings Specific to New Zealand's School Admission Practice

A chief focus of our work in New Zealand was the practice of initiating five year olds into school on their fifth birthdays, whenever that occurred during the year. Of course, the group of beginners who reached the age of five during the summer vacation would make up a small group who would start together when school opened in the Fall. But each day thereafter it was possible that a new child would drop in. And that could continue until

the very last week of school in the next spring. Unique in the world, that school admission procedure, its implications and its present aims, was one principle reason for our detailed examination of early childhood education in New Zealand.

History of the Five Year Age of School Admission

Education in the early settlement years of New Zealand was chaotic. Each province had its own system and there was little similarity among them. There was no strong central government.

About 1860 a central government was formed with its headquarters and capital at Wellington. At approximately that time public education for all of the children in New Zealand came under the management of the central government by virtue of the enactment of an education law.

The enactment of the first school law set the compulsory school range from seven to twelve years of age. A little later, approximately in 1871, the law was changed to allow free public education from age five through twelve, though keeping it compulsory only from seven through twelve.

Almost immediately, parents began to send their children to school at five and consequently there was a very rapid growth in the primary schools. However, there was a period of relatively uncontrolled enrollment before the central government was given a strong hand in school management. Most schools at the time were sole charge (one-room) schools, and individual schoolmasters allowed young and old to enter.

In the log of the Kaiwharawhara School for the year 1887, under the date of May 12, an entry was made by Mr. Robert Lee, then Inspector of Schools, which reads as follows: "there are many children under five years of age. I think as government now declines to pay the grant for children under five, that all who are not at least four and a half should be excluded at once. All under five within the 30th of June must be struck off the roll."

In the admission register of the same school for the same year, there is evidence that as of the beginning of the school term there were children as young as two years and nine months of age enrolled. While that was not usual, there were many children enrolled who were under five.

It is speculated by New Zealand educational historians and other leaders that the "drop-in" enrollment pattern originated out of such conditions as those noted above. In short, the central government provided financial support to local schools based on the number of children enrolled, and disallowed support for any child not past his fifth birthday. Therfore, as soon as a child became five he was eligible for government-supported education. Moreover, in the pre-government—controlled schools children had been entered anytime during the year in terms of family convenience and the flexibility of the local schoolmasters. The local schoolmaster, whose livelihood depended upon satisfying the parents of the community, was pleased to accept children who would swell his roll. And he was not inhibited by any firmly-fixed concepts of grades or standards or forms, since they were concepts not in wide usage.

Families learned that it was the child's "right" to go to school at age five, and the practice of exercising that right spread. The practice was reinforced some years later when the government instituted a free school insurance plan for all children officially on the school register, i.e. five years of age or older. The net effect is that the practice of starting to school on the fifth birthday became firmly established as a social pattern in New Zealand.

It is very important to note that there was no prior rationale for the practice based on educational principles or on the psychology or sociology of childhood. The practice came into being on account of what was probably a combination of circumstances related to an arbitrary political decision. Any presumed educational advantages are based on after-the-fact rationalizations.

Beginners on the Opening Day

Five hundred children were assembled in the early morning February sun on the concrete-covered portion of the play ground of the Robertson Road Primary School.

Though the late summer day was cool, many were in bare feet or sandals. Each carried a small suitcase or briefcase called a "school bag".

The veterans were soon sorted by their teachers into class groups and led into the building. The newcomers to school waited expectantly to be sorted that day for the first time.

To greet the new group of five years olds was a staff of four full-time persons: Mrs. Beth Henry the supervisor of junior classes, and the Primary One teachers, Miss Bernice Wong, Miss Angelia Keegan and Mrs. Elaine Stuart. The beginning youngsters had been registered at the school by their mothers before the first day of classes. This morning they had been brought to school by parents, older siblings, or had made it on their own.

The beginning children were divided (apparently randomly) into two groups of 15 and led to two classrooms. Miss Wong took charge of one; Miss Keegan the other. Mrs. Stuart worked back and forth between the classrooms to help the other two teachers.

There was another group of about 30 children who were officially in Primary One, having started school the year before and having not been moved up to Primary Two. Those youngsters were placed together with another Primary One teacher and were not mingled with children coming to school for the first time.

Mrs. Henry, the S.J.C., did not assign a class to herself at this time of the year, though she might later. Instead she gave overall supervision to the project while organizing the materials and records which had to be taken care of at that time.

The children for the most part were remarkably docile and very able to follow directions. Except for four or five who seemed bewildered,

bothered or nonchalant about the whole thing, all the children fell into work patterns almost immediately. One boy, perhaps the biggest boy in the group, a handsome lad with blonde hair and blue eyes, lost his school bag among the pile that was in one corner of the room and burst into tears. The teacher was quickly able to help him find his school bag but it was some time before he was quiet. However, before very long, all of the children were brought by the teacher into an organized group.

On the very first day, the teacher began to teach reading. When the children went home from school that day most of them would be able to read at least the word "mother" and take home with them a picture of mother that they had drawn, and on the bottom of which the teacher had printed the word "mother".

Immediately the children began to learn to read their names, as well. The teachers used name tags as a basis for that instruction.

So far as all the teachers in this school are concerned, they told us they believe the development of children is enhanced by having them come to school on a staggered basis, as is accomplished by entering the day after the fifth birthday. These teachers could scarcely imagine doing it any other way. When asked reasons, there were no real differences among the teachers, the headmasters and others as to the pros and cons. Some just mentioned certain reasons oftener than others, but all were strongly in favor of the approach which is currently in use. (The actual pros and cons stated are discussed in another section of this report.)

The three teachers and the S.J.C. would have preferred that even the small number of children (30) they dealt with on the first day could have been received six at a time on each of the five days of the first week, or three at a time on each of the first ten days of school, or ten at a time on each Monday of the first three weeks of school. Any of such arrangements would, they felt, have encouraged more ready "settling in" on the part of the children and afforded more opportunity for the teachers to learn to know the children as individuals.

Beginning after the Term Has Started

Tommy Adams and his mother stopped first at the headmaster's office where there was a ten-minute conference among all three. The youngster was spotless, and what looked like a really stubborn cowlick was plastered down with the rest of his dark brown hair at least for the time being. Names and age were verified, forms were given to the mother to be completed and returned, and Tommy was welcomed simply and directly by the principal.

The school term had started almost a month before, so that morning Tommy was joining an already established class of 20 others. The S.J.C. came to the principal's office, spent a few moments with mother and child, and then took them to the Primary I class to meet the young lady who was to be Tommy's teacher for the rest of the school year.

Leaving the rest of the 20 pupils to their own devices for a little while the teacher took a boy and a girl, Jim and May, with her into the hall outside the open classroom door. Apparently she had made some previous arrangement with them, for each brought along a small object made recently in class. Greeting Tommy, she introduced May and Jim and asked them to help her and the rest of the class to make Tommy welcome, show him around, and generally assist him in settling in with the others. The S.J.C. and Tommy's mother faded into the background as May and Jim told Tommy about making the things they had brought from the classroom, admired his school bag, showed him where to put it, walked with him and the teacher into the classroom, and took him along to sit with them as the teacher introduced Tommy to the whole class and went back to leading them in a discussion of a trip to a bakery they had made the day before. Before long she had Tommy responding to some of the questions she put to the class, and it seemed apparent that he was comfortably melding into the group.

The S.J.C. went back to her office with Tommy's mother. There Mrs. Adams had the opportunity to talk and to ask questions about the school, the program, the teacher, or anything she wished. The S.J.C. made sure that Mrs. Adams was informed about certain features and expectations of

the school reinforcing a number of points made earlier by the principal. After a pleasant chat, Mrs. Adams left.

Later the S.J.C. met Tommy's teacher at morning tea in the staff room. They exchanged quick impressions about Tommy, who seemed to be adjusting satisfactorily. The S.J.C. made arrangements to talk in more detail later with Tommy's teacher about added background supplied by Mrs. Adams.

The above notes are a composite we put together from many observations. It is not exactly like any of the situations we saw, but it seems to us to be a fair example of a typical "drop in" school admission.

It should be pointed out that there are very wide variations from school to school in the sophistication and effectiveness of the procedures used. Also, it is obvious that marked differences in child and parent behavior can be expected in response to any admission procedure. However, it was our impression that the range of procedures among schools, from clumsy to sophisticated and from ineffective to very effective, was considerably greater than the range of child reactions to the procedures. We would suspect that there is a circular interaction of the style of admission ritual and the attitudes of the teacher, S.J.C. and headmaster toward staggered admissions. Whichever touches off the dynamics of the interaction is open for speculation, too, but there seemed to us to be a high probability that each reinforces the other, favorable attitudes being strengthened by superior procedures, and the reverse.

Reactions of Professional Educators to Admission Procedure

The New Zealand method of admitting beginners has been debated for at least the past ten years. The following alternatives have been proposed:

Annual admission at beginning of school year

Semi-annual admission at beginning and middle of school year

Monthly admission throughout the school year

Weekly admission throughout the school year

Weekly admission for the first month or two of the school year

Annual admission for large schools, with small schools using present system

Local option, with headmaster and staff and school committee determining practice

Proposals for change in the form of resolutions have been put annually before the New Zealand Teachers Institute, the national association of primary school professional personnel, at the yearly conventions. The suggestions for change have been kept alive chiefly by the Wellington sub-group. Each year the new proposals have been rejected by very substantial majorities.

In individual instances among educators feeling runs high about the New Zealand admission procedure. A few are greatly opposed and more are firmly favored. The great body of teachers, however, appear not to have given the matter much thought. Large numbers seemed surprised to learn that other countries, on the whole, used different admission procedures from that of New Zealand.

This investigation appears to be the first to begin any planned study of any of the matters noted above. New Zealand educators have been aware of the need for research on all of them, but have not had the opportunity to plan and conduct it.

Advantages and Disadvantages of New Zealand School Admission Practice

Hundreds of statements were collected about the advantages and disadvantages of admitting children on their fifth birthdays. The most frequent advantages claimed were these:

a. The teacher gets to know each new entrant as an individual.

b. The teacher can readily spend time attending to a new entrant since the rest of the children in the class can occupy themselves for a reasonable period.

c. The new entrant has a "special day"; one of the most important events of that day is the new entrant's arrival.

d. The new entrant joins children already familiar with school routines and has examples of expected routines to follow.

e. Children entering can be helped by the ones who know how and where and what to do, encouraging responsibility in children already present.

Those most frequently mentioned points suggest that there are advantages for the entering pupil for individualizing instruction, for pupil adjustment, for social recognition, and for ready familiarization with the school. Moreover, teachers can use the opportunity to help other children to learn to take personal and social responsibility.

The disadvantages most frequently noted were of a different kind. The four most often mentioned were:

a. Teachers spend too much time during the year on orientation of individual new entrants, repeating what could as well be done for a whole group once. This represents loss of teaching time for children already there.

b. The teacher is constantly subject to interruption of teaching plans to admit a new entrant, reducing the effectiveness of instruction.

c. It is bewildering and distressing for a new child to enter a strange classroom as the only new-comer. New entrants feel inferior or a nuisance because of being the only ones who do not know how to do things.

d. New entrants cause wasteful and unsettling reorganization of classes making it necessary to move children and teachers from class to class to keep enrollments more even.

Such points as the four just listed focus first on the time the teacher takes from teaching the rest of the class and the time lost by the other pupils from learning. The second focus is on the personal adjustment of the new entrant and the third on the administration of class organization in the primary years.

On only one of the most frequent claims for advantage or disadvantage is there direct confrontation. That is the matter of the initial personal adjustment of the new pupil. On the one hand it is argued by some educators

that the New Zealand admission process is easier for and is likely to produce more ready adjustment for the beginner, and on the other hand the opposite is anticipated by other New Zealand educators.

It is important to keep in mind that the above assessments are not arm-chair speculations. Rather, they come from people who have lived with the New Zealand admission procedure and who have witnessed its consequences.

Sources of Reactions

The table below shows the distribution of persons who responded to our inquiries about the pros and cons of the New Zealand school admission procedure:

Sources of Information from Interviews, by Category

Public school teachers of beginners, including supervisors of junior classes	54
Play Center Supervisors (teachers) and Kindergarten Directors (teachers)	27
Parents of pre-school children and beginners	55*
Headmasters and first Assistants (elementary principals and assistants)	34
Other School Officials (Senior Inspectors, Inspectors, Supervisors)	30
Officials of Kindergarten Association, Play Centre Association, Child Care Centres	15
University, Teachers College and Kindergarten Training Faculty	12
Others	9
TOTAL	236

*Ten of the parents were also school teachers or officials, but are counted only once in the distribution.

The interviews were done in both the North and South Islands, with cities and rural regions included for both. Most of the sample came from the Auckland, Wellington, Rotorua and Wanganui regions in the more heavily

populated North Island. Others came from the Christchurch, Queenstown, Te Anau, and Dunedin sections of the South Island.

It was not feasible to employ procedures to guarantee representativeness of the samples. Therefore the true proportions of responses in the population may differ from those obtained. The substance of the responses, however, may be taken as actual. That is, the viewpoints expressed are those of New Zealanders. We believe it is highly likely that any added viewpoints found in a more representative sample would differ only in degree rather than in kind from those already stated by members of our sample. We venture that opinion partly because we observed that very little new material appeared in the last 25 to 30 percent of the interviews. Added assurance in that regard was given through our practice of asking persons being interviewed to state not only their own viewpoints but also the pros and cons of the matter they had heard expressed by others.

Construction of Position Statements

When the comments made about the admissions procedure were tabulated it was found that 43 "position statements" could be said to include all the 202 different responses collected. A "position statement" is a sentence constructed by the investigators to convey the essential sense of a point of view which might be expressed in many slightly different ways. For example, a "position statement" is as follows:

"Absorbing new children into established classroom groups is difficult for the teachers."

Several teachers expressed that concept in slightly different ways. Their remarks were tabulated as expressing agreement with that position statement. In a like manner all the 202 different responses were related to the 43 "position statements".

After that, the "position statements" were reviewed, and it was found that they fell naturally under four more general headings. The headings are

as follows, and include expressions of points of view as to the effect of the New Zealand school admission procedure on:

Personal and Social Adjustment of Pupils

Conduct of Instruction by the Teacher

Administration of the Primary School

Teacher - Parent Relationships

In what follows the points of view expressed by the persons interviewed are summarized.

Effect on Personal and Social Adjustment of Pupils

*Pros	*Cons
The new entrant joins children already familiar with school routines to follow.	It is bewildering and distressing for a new child to enter a strange classroom as the only newcomer.
The new entrant has a "special day" when he is at least one of the most important events of that day.	Children already in school are unsettled by the admission of new children.
Children entering can be helped by the ones who know how and where and what to do, encouraging responsibility in children already present.	Child may have to work with slow group of older children until sufficient additional children have been admitted to form a new group; may not fit into already formed groups.
The teacher can cope more easily with the infrequent child who is upset and cries, for the rest of the children are well settled.	The child cannot receive as much attention from the teacher as he can when all are new together.
Child enters a stable active atmosphere where there is a minimum of confusion and insecurity.	New entrant feels inferior or a nuisance because he is the only one who doesn't know how to do things.
New pupils among settled ones settle down very quickly.	Child may need to have three or four different teachers in one year.
The one-to-one relationship is particularly helpful when the child is deprived or difficult or one who has not had pre-school education.	Children entering school together settle in and adjust and make friends more readily.
	Children entering late in the year, even though good achievers, are sometimes held back because of social and emotional immaturity.

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*Pros and cons are listed in order of frequency. Thus there is no special relationship intended between statements which fall opposite each other in the pair of lists.

Conduct of Instruction by the Teacher

Pros	Cons
Teachers can readily spend time attending to a new entrant since the rest of the class members can occupy themselves for a period.	It is stressful on the teacher to attempt to settle in a newcomer and keep the class functioning well.
The teacher gets to know the new entrant child as an individual.	Teachers spend too much time during the year on orientation of individual new entrants, repeating what could as well be done for a whole group at once. This represents loss of teaching time for children already there.
Absence due to illness is not such a serious matter since the missed work can easily be made up because the work is individualized within the junior school years.	Absorbing new children into established classroom groups is difficult for the teacher.
The child who is ready to move rapidly in systematic learning does not have to wait to be admitted later with a group.	The teacher is constantly subject to interruption of teaching plans to admit a new entrant.
Enables more flexible grouping to be maintained, allowing each child to find his own level.	Child misses beginning of year and introduction to school when routines are established and trips and pre-reading program conducted.
Classes at beginning of year are smaller, allowing for greater individual teaching for at least part of the year.	Tough on the teacher who must present reading and mathematics in interesting way; this taxes and overtires the teacher unnecessarily.
Majority of children are ready for formal education at age five, and many are at age four.	Class is not a compact working unit.
Child is admitted when he is ready, not because of an administrative convenience.	Planning of work for a known group is much easier for the teacher than having to plan individually.
Tends to focus attention on the individual child from the outset of his school career.	Added attention is needed from the teacher to decide whether the new child should be hurried along to work with an existing class group or whether other children will soon be coming to allow a new group to be formed.

Administration of the Primary School

Pros	Cons
Even in large schools where several new entrants come each day it is feasible, through proper organization and adminstration, to maintain individualization of admission.	Many entrants each day in larger schools obviates the values of individualized admission.
	Staffing of schools would be easier to organize for a known group.
	New entrants cause wasteful and unsettling reorganization of classes.
	Promotion to standard one (Grade 3) complicated because children do not spend exactly the same time in primary years.

Teacher - Parent Relationships

Pros	Cons
Teacher can confer with new entrant's mother while children already in the class occupy themselves.	Parents assume child is ready at five.
Parent can be made to feel more at home and welcome in the classroom.	
Meets traditional parent expectations.	
It is the child's acknowledged right.	
Tends to equality of opportunity.	

The above points of view show marked variations. Also, they deal with matters which are acknowledged to be significant variables affecting the quality of education. It is evident, based on the viewpoints expressed,

that there are clear differences in opinion on such items as the following:

- Entering Pupil Adjustment
- Adjustment of Pupils Already in School
- Organization of Classes
- Class Size
- Teacher Knowledge of Pupils
- Ease of Teaching
- Parent - Teacher Interaction
- Organization for Instruction

Researchable questions or hypotheses could be developed regarding all of the above topics in relation to the New Zealand admission practice. They could be studied fairly well in the natural setting of two countries with the differing admission practices and otherwise fairly similar schooling practices.

Discussion of "Position Statements"

Some of the items mentioned by individuals we interviewed really need not take much time to research. It is possible to determine whether they are accurate or not by checking actual practice. For example, it is our observation that the viewpoint that new entrants consistently cause wasteful and unsettling reorganization of classes really does not hold up under hard scrutiny. True, in a number of schools first year pupils have been shifted among three to five teachers and as many classrooms during the year. But with very rare exceptions the shifting was plainly an outcome of out-dated organization and administration by the headmaster and the supervisor of junior classes. More often in recent years the beginner stays with his initial classmates for all the first year he attends and frequently for the next year, too. That arrangement is feasible in New Zealand primary schools if appropriate, recommended and available organizational and administrative measures are taken by the headmaster and the S.J.C.

On the other hand, size of class is an important factor. With almost forty children (1:40 is the teacher-pupil ratio basis for primary education organization in New Zealand) at the start of the school year, the teacher

of beginners is certainly hampered in attempting to individualize the induction of new children. Teachers who have that situation are understandably opposed to receiving more children.

The most important question, of course, is not to be answered simply by listing and tallying the pros and cons. The most important question is the real, measured affect of the practice upon the child's educational progress. And it is important to note that the statements of pro or con positions really reveal that the process of admission is not necessarily the same in any two schools, even though the children at both come on their fifth birthdays. The actual process can range all the way from a friendly, understanding induction into a group pre-disposed to be accepting and helpful to a quick, terse greeting and dismissal of the parents and a sink or swim immersion of the entrants into an initially unconcerned or even hostile group. It could be speculated that educators who favor the New Zealand admission plan would tend to use that plan with more positive effects than would those who oppose the plan. Thus, to some extent the pro and con points of view expressed to the investigators would parallel the positive or negative behavior of educators in applying the admission procedure. While there is no firm proof for that position, the limited observations of the investigators tend to confirm it.

"This kind of admission is probably an aid for children and something of an immediate added burden for teachers", is a comment of one supervisor of junior classes. Another said, "The teacher who considers organization as more important than the child as a person is irritated and unsympathetic as each new child arrives and this can influence the child's entry into school, --and long afterwards." We believe these quotations epitomize points of view which should be given very high priority for study, framed as hypotheses, and subjected to investigation through carefully designed research.

Reactions of Parents to Admission Procedure

A separate tabular presentation of parent viewpoints is not necessary, since the overwhelming majority of reactions from the 55 interviewed can be stated quite simply. First, all but ten (who were school officials or their wives) had no knowledge of any other school entry procedure than that of New Zealand. Second, every one of the parents was satisfied with the procedure now in effect. Third, the notion that there might be pros or cons had not occurred to them, so they had none to present. Perhaps most important, all the parents tended to react in terms of what they considered to be their "rights under the law" and their children's rights, rather than by a consideration of alternatives. In short, if the law gave children the right to begin school at five years of age, that is when they should begin. And "five years of age" was taken very literally; the arrival of the fifth birthday settled the date of school entry, regardless of the time in the school term the birthday took place.

FINDINGS ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION OF THE MAORI

It was hoped that the experience of New Zealand with its Polynesian population might suggest useful procedures to be considered by the United States. For that reason, as well as the desire to have full information on all aspects of early childhood education, a special study was made of this topic.

Maori Similarities to Disadvantaged Blacks

The rapidly growing Maori population has a number of educationally significant characteristics which can be compared to those of disadvantaged Blacks in the United States. There are important differences, too, between the Maori and Blacks in the United States, and the differences ought not be minimized. In our judgement, however, the differences seem less relevant to educational planning and operations than the similarities. In brief, some of the most educationally important similarities between Maoris and disadvantaged Blacks are:

1. Disillusion, distrust and reaction against whites
2. Birth rate significantly greater than that of the dominant culture group
3. Increasing migration from rural to urban centers
4. Socio-economic status low relative to the total society
5. Concentration in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations
6. Acceptance of white technology and ways at a superficial level
7. Little experience with individual property ownership
8. Limited formal education for many generations
9. Home environments not supportive of school attainments for children
10. Frequent household moves
11. Use of extended family in adoption and care of children
12. Absenteeisms fostered by prevailing home life patterns
13. Language patterns markedly different from prevailing culture
14. Cultural dislocation from their own to a European-based foreign one

The preceding list suggests why it seemed potentially fruitful to study the New Zealand approaches to pre-school education in general and that of the Maori in particular. The first five items of similarity seem to us to be those whose presence we could best support. The remaining nine, however, we advance with a little more caution, but we offer them nevertheless in the speculative and hypotheses-proposing spirit of this whole report. Hopefully, with such similarities, there might be something being done in New Zealand which could be adapted for use in the United States' efforts to correct the shortcomings of its own educational system as applied to disadvantaged Blacks and other disadvantaged persons with similar characteristics of educational importance.

Pre-school Education for the Maori

It was apparent by the early 1960's that the pre-school education of New Zealand did not touch the Maori significantly, and that constituted a serious problem to New Zealand educators. Very few Maori children attended pre-school, and those who did were mainly those who needed it least, in a relative sense, since their families tended to be the ones already assimilating into the European style of life in other ways, also.

In 1962 the Maori Education Foundation, a private agency, responded to the identification of the problem by sponsoring and fostering play centers especially (though not exclusively) for Maori pre-school children. They appeared mainly in rural areas populated chiefly by the Maori. They were attractive to the Maori, and it was thought the attraction was probably due mainly to the resemblance between the recommended play center organization and the ancient pattern of community life of the Maori.

The Maori play centers did not attain their objectives, however. An important reason seemed to be that improved models and higher standards of language development and expression were not provided to a sufficient degree. The Maori mothers, even with the best of intentions, could not be the examples their children really needed. And, despite serious recruitment efforts, suitable "teachers" could not be supplied.

It is important to keep in mind that the Maori Education Foundation, a private agency, worked with and employed the approaches of another private agency, the Play Center Association, in the 1962 effort to deal with the evident need for pre-school education designed for Maori children. The move was applauded and aided by the government, but it was chiefly a non-government effort.

Only recently, therefore, has the New Zealand education establishment moved to correct the educational disadvantage of Maori children. Awareness of the problem is found among the top level educational officials, but it is not widespread in the business, commercial, industrial or other professional parts of the nation. There, the relatively low status of the Maori is attributed to "the nature of the Maori". The lack of public understanding that the tap-roots of Maori disaffection may lie in early childhood training has handicapped both educators and the Maori. Contributing to the difficulty has been the centralization of authority about educational policy and practice in Wellington (the capital), far from the location of the Maori educational problems, since the Maori are found chiefly in the north and northeast.

The 1969 plan of the government, a new and totally government-supported effort, called for starting four (perhaps five) prototype Pre-school Centers for disadvantaged children in various parts of the country. While advertised as being open to all disadvantaged children, they really focused on Maori children whose parents would ordinarily not see that they went to Kindergarten or to Play Centers. Unlike other government-supported pre-schools, the Pre-School Centers are located in primary schools and are under the direction of the headmasters. We interviewed the government officials in charge of the new centers and visited one, located in a remote rural area. Detailed conversations were held with the headmaster, the teachers, the inspectors and supervisors in charge, and the District Senior Inspector. In other sections of the nation, also, we interviewed school officials responsible for such experimental Pre-School Centers.

It remains unclear whether the current efforts to provide corrective early childhood education will prove effective. There is, as yet, no curriculum structure for the new classes. Teachers are recruited from the kindergarten or primary ranks, with no special preparation. There are no plans for assessment of the development of the children. The Maori as a group are not involved in the design and organization of the new program.

It is apparent that the developmental stage of Maori pre-school education is such that it is not possible to determine what it will be like when ready for full implementation. It is not clear whether New Zealand will need to repeat some of the errors made when compensatory education was begun on a large scale in other countries or whether New Zealand educators will be able to profit from experiences elsewhere, thus telescoping the trial and error period and moving more rapidly to a fully productive stage.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH

There is a strong desire on the part of educators in New Zealand to develop a more substantial research base for all aspects of their professional work. Most of the leaders we interviewed expressed that desire in a number of ways. Further, there are several structures in which research efforts can be based. The most evident is the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, with a permanent staff and excellent facilities in Wellington, including space and equipment for visiting researchers. In addition the government education officials in Wellington and in the various regions made it clear that research efforts on matters within their respective spheres of responsibility would be welcomed. They indicated willingness to provide facilities and assistance to the extent feasible. The same was true of the higher education institutions, including the colleges which prepare teachers and the universities which offer degree programs in education. That acceptant and helpful atmosphere made our work easier and suggests that other interested researchers would find it the same.

Research on School Beginning Practices

As noted earlier, there is no body of research bearing directly on New Zealand's unique school beginning practice. There is no lack of opinion, often conflicting, on its merits and effects. Especially now, with the resurgence of interest in the individualization of instruction and the concern for improved social and emotional adjustment in young children, the New Zealand approach to starting children to school on an individual basis can be expected to invite the attention of educational and mental health researchers. The data we collected forms a base upon which a variety of questions and hypotheses can well be developed.

Research on the Education of Minority Groups

Planning for compensatory, remedial and preventive education for disadvantaged children is in the very beginning stage in New Zealand. The educational authorities are quite willing to consider proposals which promise effective solutions to the problems they now confront. Thus interested researchers should find there a potentially fruitful field in which to test new approaches or to refine and adapt approaches currently in use in the United States and elsewhere. A strong and prompt educational effort in this area has high priority for the national government. For that reason it is advisable to watch closely what will evolve in New Zealand in response to that high priority, for the outcomes may be ideas and concepts which would prove useful elsewhere.

SUMMARY

This report has six major parts plus appendices. The introduction points out how the study came into being, based on the evident need to learn more about the "drop-in" pattern of beginning school used only in New Zealand.

The procedures section details the various ways in which we collected data. The general findings cover the social and governmental factors influencing early childhood education as well as essential information on the schools.

The next section deals with findings regarding education specifically in the early childhood years. It ranges across the purposes and organisation of the primary and pre-school programs, with particular attention to the pre-school period. That is followed by findings specific to New Zealand's school admission practices, including advantages and disadvantages. The last division on findings deals with early childhood education of the Maori.

Implications for research from all elements of the study follow in the last major section. Research possibilities are indicated.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF FIFTH BIRTHDAY ADMISSION RATIONALE PRESENTED BY A PRIMARY HEADMASTER

(This is included to provide a sample of some of our raw data. It was written in response to several questions we put to a group of school administrators.)

Ideally it would be better if the Kindergarten was a compulsory system with the building sited on or near the school premises and under the surveillance and guidance of the Head Teacher and Infant Teacher. This would enable the children as they matured to pass naturally into the rather more formal atmosphere of the school. This is of paramount importance in an area which is socio-economic middle class and lower and has the problem of a fairly heavy Maori population (20%-25%) of school.

The S. J.C. would be able, provided she is professionally capable, to add her discernment to that of the Kindergarten Director and take in those children who have been disadvantaged through meagre experience in a sub-standard educational home environment (e.g. some Maoris, linguistically handicapped and some children from broken or poor homes) to be held as over-age placements without becoming entangled in a maze of red tape.

(These are my views and are contrary at the present time to the provisions of the Education Act.)

Dealing with the situation as is, both the S.J.C. and I concur in the proposition that children should be admitted as they reach their fifth birthday for the following reasons:

(1) It satisfies the parent's desire to have the child receive an education in a traditional institution at the legally designated time.

(2) The child has been waiting this moment anxiously and is emotionally geared to learn. He is ready for a social situation rather than the individual pre-occupation he has had up to now.

(3) If the children come in randomly it gives the teachers in the reception classes a much better chance to study them as individuals and to do a little mothering to bridge the gap from home to school.

(4) The tendency to regard a group of children as homogeneous in all respects is avoided and much more respect for individual difference is engendered. This prevents the beginning of a lockstep progress early in the child's educational career.

(5) The taking in of groups of children at spaced intervals does not make for any more homogeneity as all have vastly differing abilities, experiences and maturity and spread over the educational curve in a very short time.

(6) From a social point of view the teacher is not inundated with a creche of children unable to cope with their physical needs, look after their clothing and discover the geography of the place. Nor does she have a group of scared children all weeping empathetically with each other and equally solicitous parents running after their fully fledged educational chickens and making appropriate or otherwise maternal clucking noises and movements.

(7) It is of immense advantage to the more intelligent children as they can be rapidly placed at the level they should be.

(8) With children who have been deprived of the opportunity of going to pre-school educational centres it gives the earliest opportunity to expose them to a situation which will permit them to develop their potentialities most rapidly. Under some intake systems many must lose as much as 1/18 of their educational opportunity in the contributing school.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

Type	Age Range & Coverage	Government Recognition or Support	Objectives and Curriculum	Organization	Housing	Staffing	Relation to Primary School	Facilities and Equipment
Play Centers	2½-5 yrs.; enrolls approx. 10-15% of N. Z. children 2 to 5 half-days per week	Government supplies funds to approximate level of $9.00 per child per year.	Emphasizes free play for children equally with parent education in normal child rearing. "Play is the work of childhood" theme of centers but no curriculum or guidelines available.	Private agency; national federation of regional play center associations made up of local groups operating play centers.	May be located any safe and sanitary place; range from old houses to modern building designed as play centers. Often in spare rooms in primary school.	Teacher (called supervisor) without formal professional preparation but required to be a parent with child in center and to have completed 20-hour lecture series prescribed by Play Center Association. Also minimum of one assistant supervisor and two other mothers for 30 children.	No official relation, though sometimes housed in primary school. Very limited liaison and program articulation.	Minimum standard list, compliance being requisite for government financial support, often much supplemented by materials made or bought by parents.
Public Kindergartens	3-5 yrs.; enrolls approx. 10-15% of N. Z. children 5 half-days per week for 4-5 year olds & 3-5 half-days per week for 3-4 year olds	Government supplies teachers, supervisors, teacher-preparation & grants toward building to approximate level of $80.00 per child per year.	Fosters personal and social development and prepares child for entrance to full-time schooling in Primary 1; no curriculum or guidelines available except teacher's notes from professional courses.	Private agency; national federation made up of kindergarten associations in regions and local schools.	Separate building required to meet detailed government specifications; kindergarten may not begin until building is ready.	Teacher has two years preparation at government expense, including living costs; mothers serve as teacher aides on voluntary basis.	No official relation except at national education office level; very limited liaison and program articulation; kindergartens never in primary school buildings and rarely on same grounds.	Minimum standard list financed and specified by government, often supplemented by local donations.
Experimental Pre-Primary Classes	Initiated 1969 with 5 classes each enrolling up to 30 children 3-5 yrs. for 5 days per week	Full cost supplied by national education office through district senior inspector of primary education.	Compensatory education for culturally limited and disadvantaged children, chiefly Maori; language development is emphasized though there are no published objectives or curriculum guides.	Public school, part of the primary school & fully under direction of headmaster; may be part of assigned responsibility of supervisor of junior classes.	Uses room and facilities in primary school.	Unspecified; usually teacher trained for kindergarten or primary. Mothers are requested to assist teacher; no ratio specified.	Integral part of primary school at local level; relations less clear as yet at district, regional and national levels.	Essentially same as public kindergarten, with supplements provided on basis of reasonable requests.
Private Kindergartens	No specified limits, but usually 3-5 yrs. and usually 5 half-days per week for all, with full-day sessions possible by special arrangement; no data on number of N. Z. children enrolled, but estimates not more than 1%.	Informal recognition by national and district education officials; no government requirements or support.	Individually determined; frequently aimed at improving likelihood of success upon admission to private primary schools or "elite" public primary schools.	Each kindergarten is a private agency; may form local ties with other private kindergartens to exchange information.	No government requirements other than local ordinance regarding safety.	No government requirements, but often staffed by teacher prepared for public kindergartens or play centers.	Informal, depending upon local headmaster and supervisor of junior classes.	No minimum government standards; individually determined.
Child Care Centers	Birth to 5 years; enrolls approx. 10% of N. Z. children, 5-9 half or full-days per week, occasional short-term boarding	Licensed by government through national education office; no government support for educational programs supplied to children by Child Care Centers.	Individually determined since Child Care Centers are not officially recognized as providing pre-school education; no curriculum guides but operations much like public kindergartens or play centers since teachers have usually had training for either.	Private agency; member of national association of day care centers.	Frequently a remodeled house; must meet government safety, health & personnel standards to be licensed.	While not required to do so many employ teachers trained for kindergarten, play center or primary grades in addition to basic child care staff.	No official relation; liaison, if any, depends on local supervisor of junior classes or headmaster.	No requirements beyond basic child care facilities and equipment; educational materials determined by local circumstances.

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